UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Distr.
LIMITED
E/ECWA/ILO/Wg.4/34/Rev.1
4 June 1975
Original: ENGLISH

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA

Seminar on Manpower and Employment Planning
in the Arab Countries
Beirut, 12-24 May 1975

POINTS FOR PLAN OF ACTION IN THE FIELD OF MANPOWER AND EMPLOYMENT PLANNING

75-370

I. ACTION BY ARAB COUNTRIES

A. General Principles

1. Arab countries should declare and vigorously pursue policies designed to eliminate unemployment, to reduce both visible and disguised under-employment, and gradually to absorb a growing proportion of their population of working age in productive work.

2. The immediate objective of such employment policies should be to raise the standard of living of the population as a whole and to eliminate poverty.

3. In order to achieve this, Arab countries should:

(a) adopt full, productive and freely-chosen employment as a major goal of their national development policies and in accordance with the ILO's Convention and Recommendation on Employment Policy, 1964[1/];

(b) orient all aspects of their development policies towards the objective of full employment in a context of sustained economic growth;

(c) review national legislation, policies and practices that may limit or hamper the employment of manpower.

1/ The Convention has been ratified by Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Libya, the Sudan, Syria and Tunisia.

B. Elements of an Employment Policy

1. Population and Employment

In the effort to mobilise productive forces for development and to tap unutilised human resources:

(a) measures should be taken to organize certain economic sectors, such as agriculture, small crafts and services, which employ large numbers of workers who could be released or diverted to other sectors in accordance with the growth of employment opportunities in the latter sectors.

(b) due attention should be paid in particular to enhancing the contribution of women workers, both through making it possible for increasing members for women to participate in development tasks (including the promotion of rural development) and through enabling them to acquire the requisite skills;

(c) the promotion of women's employment should take place on the basis of equality of opportunity and treatment for men and women workers in regard to access to employment, education and training as well as terms and conditions of employment, in particular equal remuneration for work of euqual value;

(d) in developing educational and training facilities and programmes, due regard should be had to the needs of women as well as men both in the rural and traditional sector (in particular agriculture) and in modern-type activities;

(e) governments wishing to encourage the employment of women should provide or encourage the provision of child care and other facilities making it easier for women to meet their dual responsibilities and to ensure the welfare of their families;

(f) efforts should be made, through appropriate agreements between the countries concerned, to ensure that Arab Countries suffering from labour shortages can draw on Arab workers employed in European countries in order to meet these shortages.

2. Choice of Technology and Employment

(a) In those economic sectors offering some technological flexibility, every effort should be made to select technologies appropriate to national conditions, with due regard in particular to absorbing surplus labour where it exists and avoiding undesirable labour displacements in existing activities.

(b) Possibilities of applying labour-using technologies should be identified on a project-by-project basis or for specific processes within a project.

(c) Fiscal and investment policy and legislation should be reviewed with a view to correcting any bias that may favour capital-using rather than labour-using techniques in an undesirable manner.

(d) Suitable measures should be taken in introducing advanced technology to avoid creating wasteful excess capacity of production and to insure that quality and other specifications of goods produced satisfy actual economic and social needs including family, collective and intermediate consumption and exports.

(e) In the case of important industrial projects using advanced technology, such as the creation of basic industries, efforts should be made to develop linkages and complementarities with the rest of the economy, within a well planned development framework.

(f) Training facilities at all levels should be expanded to cope with the skilled personnel requirements resulting from the introduction of technology.

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(g) Steps should be taken, in particular through the educational system and mass media, to influence social attitudes and create an environment conducive to the creation of a technically minded generation.

(h) In order to solve problems related to the choice, identification and development of appropriate technology and the acquisition of technological know-how, Arab States should promote co-operation on a regional basis as well as with other developing countries seeking to achieve a New International Economic Order.

3. Trade and Employment

(a) In planning the foreign sector, Governments should take into consideration the impact of trade policies on employment on various sectors and on the choice of technology, and seek to achieve a satisfactory balance between employment objectives and foreign trade targets.

(b) Arab countries should agree on a common policy of industrial specialisation relating to the processing of, and trade in, local raw materials, so as to avoid competition between countries that have similar local resources. This should be done within a framework of economic co-operation designed to achieve the full and effective utilisation of Arab human resources and to ensure that all parties concerned benefit from the development of exports and imports.

4. Education and Employment

(a) In order to ensure that the development of education and training contributes to the achievement of employment and development objectives, to the furtherance of greater equality of opportunity as well as to the self fulfilment of individuals, governments should pay particular attention to the following points:

(i) Programmes of basic universal education should be conceived so as to impart as a minimum essential skills such as functional literacy, hygiene and civic awareness. They should be related to local needs and conditions. They should emphasize the development of analytical skills. They should infuse positive attitudes vis-à-vis manual work and types of education and training which prepare for such work.

(ii) Such basic education should be supplemented by further programmes of education and training designed so as to ensure an interaction between general education and technical and vocational education and training.

(iii) A proper balance should be maintained between the development of primary education, with a view to achieving as soon as possible the goal of universal primary education, and secondary and higher education.

(iv) Stipends and other assistance should be provided as necessary in order to remove any financial obstacle to the education and training of needy children and students.

(v) In order to avoid the emergence of surpluses of educated personnel, educational and vocational guidance and admission policies to higher education should be reviewed, as well as the structure of wages, salaries and other incentives which induce people to select certain courses of education in numbers that exceed the capacity of the economy to absorb them in productive employment.

(vi) Education should be planned as a lifelong process covering initial education and training during youth as well as adult education, literacy, and various forms of retraining, skill upgrading and refresher courses.

(vii) To supplement the existing network of educational and training facilities, maximum use should be made of informal media such as youth centres, farmers' clubs, etc. The provision of training by employing establishments should be encouraged through the provision of incentives as necessary. Accelerated training programmes should be introduced or expanded in order to meet the requirements of skilled manpower of development projects through adapting or improving available skills in the labour force. Special attention should also be paid to the problem of school drop-outs and to enabling them to have access to further education and to vocational training.

(viii) With a view to meeting the need for specialised qualified personnel responsible for undertaking the tasks of manpower and employment planning, specialised courses in this field should be provided by national universities.

(b) With a view to considering a wastage of human resources, efforts should be made to harmonize education and training policies with employment policies so that the former may better meet the needs of the labour market and of economic and social development.

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C. Statistics and Research

1. Considering that many effects of population trends are only felt after a considerable lapse of time, governments should conduct studies on long-term population trends as a basis for defining population policy in harmony with their objectives in other fields of development policy including employment policy.

2. Adequate programmes should be developed to train statisticians specialised in the collection of data pertaining to employment, unemployment and under-employment, the composition of the labour force and the distribution of incomes.

3. In view of the importance of the profile of tariffs and other protective duties in determining the patterns of growth of different sectors and the relative capital/labour intensiveness of development in those sectors, as well as, the expansion of employment opportunities in different sectors, Governments should study those relationships and, for that purpose, improve the collection and analysis of information on such tariff profiles and their effects, and seek to measure in particular price changes attributable to protective policies.

4. Arab countries should, with the assistance of Arab Labour Organisation (ALO) and ILO envisage the possibility of preparing an Arab standard classification of occupations, with due regard to the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) and local experiences and circumstances.

5. In order to promote co-operation in employment between Arab countries, efforts should be made to improve the exchange of information and statistical data on the characteristics of employment in the countries concerned and on respective policies in the fields of population; education and training; and employment in the light of overall regional development policies.

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D. Palestinian People and Occupied Territories

1. The Seminar condemns the Israeli aggression and illegal occupation of Arab territories which compel Arab populations to forced emigration. It condemns further the annexationist trade policy practised by Israel vis-à-vis the occupied territories, as well as the deprivation and destruction by Israeli authorities of Arab Palestinian assets as well as the repeated infringements of civic and trade union rights and discrimination in employment and wages affecting all Arab workers and in particular skilled workers.

The Seminar recommends that:

(1) Arab countries should treat Palestinian workers on a basis of equality of opportunity and rights with their own citizens in all matters relating to employment and conditions of employment, including trade union rights and social security.

(2) Arab countries should accept Palestinian students in their technical institutions in order to enable them to improve their technical and scientific qualifications, with a view to limiting the brain drain to countries outside the region and ensuring that the Arab World can benefit from their skills.

(3) Specialized agencies in Arab countries should collect data and conduct studies on the Palestinian labour force present in these countries and provide this information to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) that will benefit from it in planning that will serve the Palestinian people.

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II. ACTION BY REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

1. The ILO and ECWA should consider the possibility of convening a meeting of experts in manpower planning and in manpower and employment statistics with a view to recommending to Arab States a desirable standardisation of statistical concepts and data classification systems, with due regard to existing international standards in this area, including recommendations concerning the concepts to be used in measuring the intensity of labour force utilisation.

2. The ILO and ECWA should consider the establishment of a regional inter-disciplinary employment team specialized in the fields of economics, demography, manpower and education, to undertake a full-scale study of the employment situation and prospects in the context of population and overall economic and social development in Arab world, and to provide advisory services.

3. Arab States should, through the Arab League, recommend the establishment of a regional centre endowed with adequate resources and responsible for research designed to identify, adapt and develop appropriate technology, with due regard to employment and development needs, and to disseminate information about such questions in the Arabic language. Such a body should be established in consultation with ECWA and other United Nations specialized agencies and in the light of the resolution 1636 (LI) of the Economic and Social Council as well as the resolution adopted by the Second General Conference of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (ID/CONF.3/RES.2) and taking into consideration the recommendations of the United Nations Advisory Committee on the Application of Science and Technology to Development of ACAST (ID/CONF.3/11).

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4. The League of Arab States should, in consultation with Arab countries and with international and regional organizations, study the feasibility of establishing a regional fund to help countries to meet their requirements for trained personnel, including the replacement of skilled and high-level personnel lost through migration. The objective of such fund should be to develop national and, where appropriate, regional facilities, and to plan the development of vocational training at the regional level. This Fund should also provide resources to help sending countries to expand their educational and training facilities so as to meet the requirements of receiving countries. Particular attention should be given to help those countries that require training facilities but lack the necessary financial resources.

5. ECWA, ILO and ALO should co-operate with other international organizations to provide specialized technical training programmes either within or outside the Arab region and allocate quotas for such training to the respective Arab countries, so as to enable them to adjust their manpower at high and intermediate level to the pressing and urgent requirements of development projects.

6. In the field of education and training policy as related to employment, the following action should be taken:

(a) With a view to promoting a better understanding of the objectives, forecasting methods used, measures adopted, reforms introduced and results obtained in different countries, a thorough going examination and comparison should be undertaken of national policies aiming at harmonising education and employment within the framework of economic and social development plans.

(b) A quantitative evaluation of the present situation and prospective trends in regard to qualified manpower supply and demand should be carried out, with due regard to the development plans of individual

countries. This evaluation, which should be supplemented by an inventory of training facilities in the region, should bring out fields in which regional co-operation would be possible and desirable.

(c) A list of indicators of employment (including its structural, occupational, educational, incomes characteristics, etc.) and of education (including out-of-school education and training) should be prepared. Such indicators should provide a basis for the collection of data needed in order to achieve a better understanding of the relationships between employment, education and economic development at the national and regional levels, and facilitate the preparation of national plans and the development of regional co-operation.

(d) Governments should consider in consultation with the Arab League and ILO the feasibility of establishing an Arab regional training institute specialized in the provision of qualified personnel for undertaking the tasks of manpower and employment planning.

(e) ECWA and ILO should follow-up on the above recommendations, in consultation with other international and regional organizations concerned, by preparing a programme of work on the above four points, including preparatory studies, meetings and working groups, and the necessary funds should be made available to them for that purpose from appropriate sources.

7. Adequate funds should be provided to enable ECWA and ILO in co-operation with ECA and ALO.

(a) To set up small study groups to assess availabilities and needs of different manpower categories in Arab countries and study the different aspects of employment policy and manpower planning in relation with development planning.

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(b) These study groups would meet at regular intervals and finish their respective tasks in two years, at the end of which their reports would be submitted and form the subject of a meeting of Arab technicians and experts, in the different fields of the work of these committees.

(c) This meeting should be followed in the fourth year by a Conference of policy makers to examine the feasibility of the recommendations of the technical meeting in the field of manpower and employment planning and recommend policy measures for implementation to be submitted to the respective executing organs at the national regional and international levels.

8. The Economic Department of the Arab League and the Council for Arab Economic Unity should cooperate with Arab League Specialized Agencies, in particular IDCAS, ALESCO and the Center for the Development of Administration with a view to:

(a) Setting-up a practical and positive plan of co-ordinated studies and actions designed to ensure the co-ordination and promotion of economic and social development of the Arab World.

(b) Establishing an Arab Bank for Reconstruction and Development(ABRD) whose structure and financial resources would enable it to provide advisory services and technical and financial assistance to member countries, and to recommend to the Arab League and the CAEU strategic projects for the development of the Arab World as a whole; such projects to be selected on the basis of economic and social criteria, including geographic location, economic return and employment creation, and to contribute to the movement of Arab capital and human resources within the Arab World in the interest of balanced and rapid growth.

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9. Arab countries should consider the feasibility of merging the greatest possible number of national development funds into a unified Arab bank which will further the development of the Arab World in the way mentioned above.

10. Fully aware of the resolution adopted by the International Labour Organization Conference on 20 June 1974 with regard to the policy of discrimination, racism and violation of freedom and trade union rights which is practised by the Israeli authorities in Palestine and other occupied territories.

The Seminar expresses the wish that the implementation of the said resolution will be accelerated.

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